Improvement Cymru Academy Toolkit Guide

Driver Diagram

What is a Driver Diagram?

A Driver Diagram is a visual tool used within improvement that takes an entire project and breaks it down into a series of parts. These parts are what drive the completion of the project. It is made up of a single aim, which is broken down into drivers, followed by change ideas (potential solutions).

Rationale

It is a visual strategy for addressing a complex problem. It enables the team to articulate what parts need changing and is an inclusive process that is split into drivers in order achieve a desired outcome called an 'aim'.

When to use?

Driver diagrams should be developed in the initial stages of the project. Importantly, they are not static and should evolve with greater understanding of the project or as the 'theory of change' develops. They can be used alongside your project charter so that everyone can see the thinking.

Driver diagrams allow the project team to see quickly and clearly the 'theory of change' (how the aim will be achieved). It helps teams work collaboratively and ensures everyone has a sense of shared understanding and purpose. A Driver Diagram can show that one change may affect multiple areas and thus help to achieve the aim. Driver diagrams can support understanding in many contexts such as process reliability and enhance user experience.

How to use?

Start with the **aim (statement)** – This is intended to support you set out what you wish to achieve. It must be **SMART** (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely).

Next brainstorm potential drivers with your team – these are the parts of the system that need to be focussed on to achieve the aim.

The Primary drivers are the big topics and the secondary drivers are the areas of focus. Remember Driver Diagrams should be developed as a group and generated by the subject experts or stakeholders who work closely with the system.

Concentrate on generating ideas for drivers at this stage; **do not try** to allocate into primary or secondary drivers right away.

Once you've completed the brainstorm, cluster the ideas to create an agreed set of drivers.

- ## Primary Drivers

These are the big topics or areas that you will need to work on, to achieve your aim.

All key areas of the system that you will need to influence within your project, should be captured within your drivers

- ## Secondary Drivers

Each primary driver is made up of secondary drivers. These are what would need to be in place to positively influence the primary driver. The difference between primary and secondary drivers is one of importance. If the driver is big and critical, you should consider it as a possible primary driver.

You may need to involve other people who understand the primary drivers, to identify suitable secondary drivers.

Set these out in the Driver Diagram format.

1. Add your changes/interventions, these are your change ideas, that you think will lead to an improvement.
2. Draw lines between the drivers to show their interactions.
3. Refine the Driver Diagram as changes are tested and measured using the PDSA cycle.

Example- Driver Diagram 1

The example below demonstrates a Driver Diagram which aims to achieve a 3lb weight loss by 31st October.
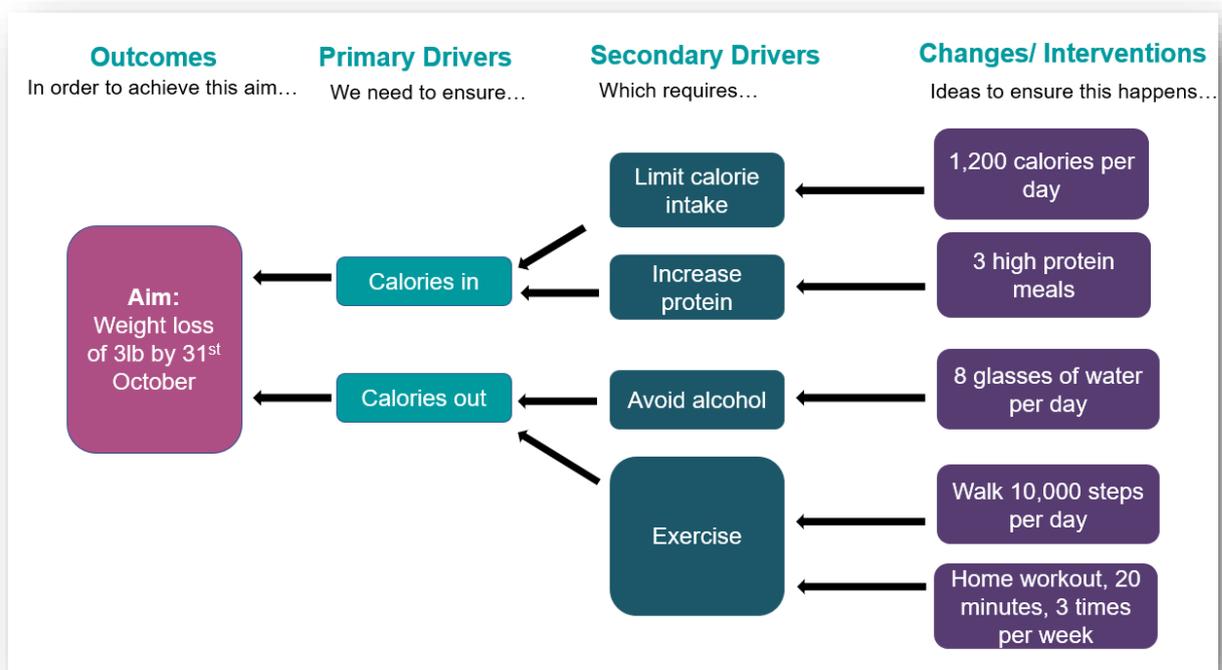

Diagram 1: Driver Diagram

Look at Diagram 1 and consider the following:

Outcome - 'To achieve weight loss of 3lb by 31st October' your project aim should be SMART.

Primary Drivers - we need to give attention to how the weight loss can be achieved i.e. **'Calories in' and 'Calories out'**

Secondary Drivers are the areas of focus for each primary driver**.**

Change/Interventions are the ideas that the team identify to achieve the aim, for example **'Walk 10,000 steps per day.'**
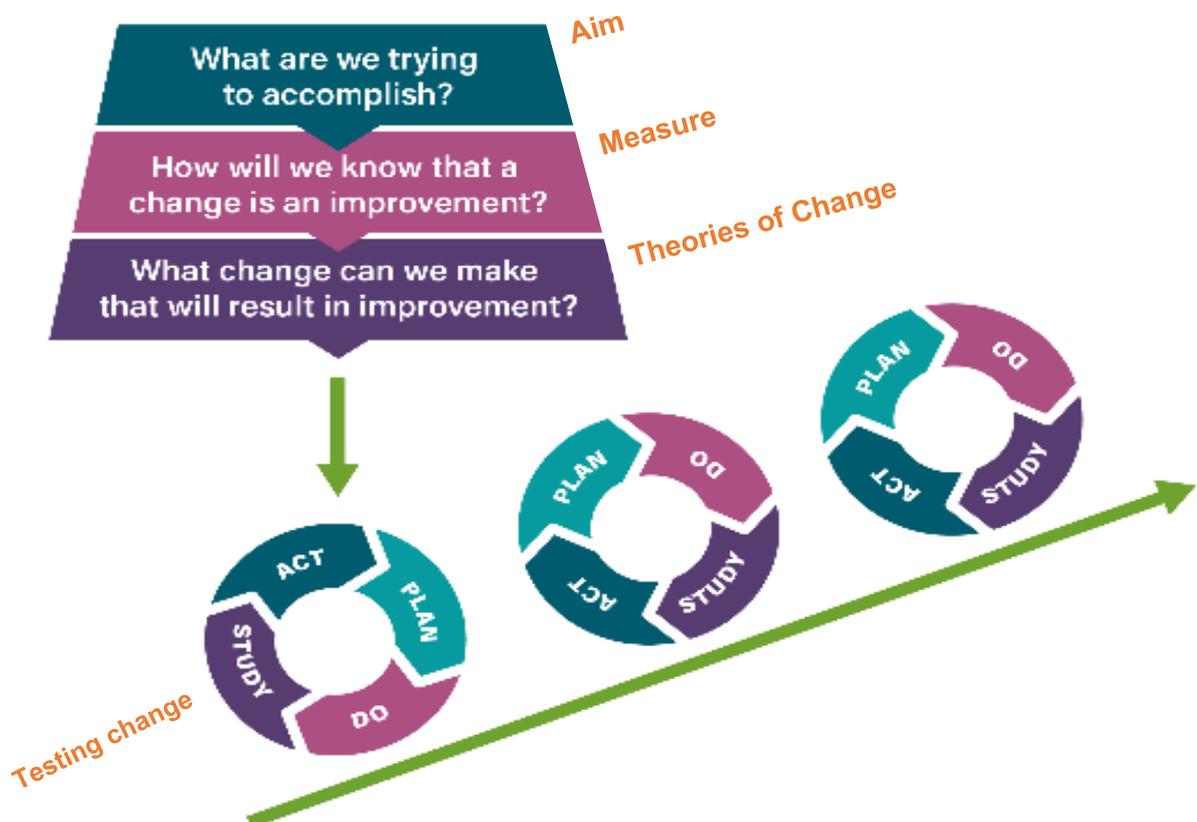
To help develop the diagram:

 Secondary drivers can connect to more than one primary driver. More than one change idea can connect to a secondary driver.

To show the strength of the relationship you may wish to use lines, solid if strong, dotted if weaker.

What next?

The Driver Diagram creates a visual image of your change theory. Your changes ideas can be tested using the **Model for Improvement**, which includes PDSA cycles. Importantly, you are learning through testing and continual revision.

The Model for Improvement

Helpful tips

At the 'brain storming stage' where you and your team are collecting ideas for your change cycles (PDSAs) ask the question, 'To achieve our aim what are the things that we need to change'. Use post it notes and cluster ideas together – this will help you to identify your primary drivers before splitting into primary and secondary drivers.

Split the larger groups into smaller groups to focus on primary and secondary drivers.

Refine the Driver Diagram as changes are tested and measured, use this as a focal point during improvement meetings.

Additional resources

If you would like to learn more about making improvement to your workplace take a look at our website for what we offer you https://phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/improvement-cymru/improvement-cymru-academy/ or email us at improvementcymruacademy@wales.nhs.uk to find out about the improvement courses we can offer.

Further reading

Institute for Healthcare Improvement (2017). *QI Essential Toolkit: Driver Diagram* [Online] Available at: http://www.ihi.org/resources/Pages/Tools/Quality-Improvement-Essentials-Toolkit.aspx [Accessed 30 August 2022].

NHS Hertfordshire Partnership University (2021). *Driver Diagrams*. [Online] Available at https://improvements.hpft.nhs.uk/start-an-improvement-project/driver-diagrams/ [Accessed 30 August 2022].

Improvement.nhs.uk. (2018). *Driver diagram-tree diagrams | NHS Improvement*. [Online] Available at: https://improvement.nhs.uk/resources/driver-diagrams-tree-diagrams/ [Accessed 30 August 2022].

Brandon, B., and Provost, L. (2015) *What's your theory? Driver diagram serves as tool for building and testing theories for improvement*. [Online] Available at:

http://www.apiweb.org/QP_whats-your-theory_201507.pdf [Accessed 30 August 2022].

Unsplash.com (2021) *Man working marketing strategy* [Online] Available at: person writing on white paper photo – Free Image on Unsplash [Accessed 31 August 2022]

Associates in Process Improvement (1996) *The Model of Improvement*

Institute for Healthcare Improvement Whiteboard Driver Diagram
Whiteboard Driver Diagrams - YouTube [Accessed 12 September 2022]